Doctor or *Dottore*? How well do honorifics travel outside of Italy?

Manuela Caniato, University College Ghent, Claudia Crocco, Ghent University, and Stefania Marzo, KU Leuven University

ABSTRACT

This paper illustrates the results of a corpus-driven analysis on the translation of realia in subtitles from Italian into Dutch.

In Translation Studies, realia are generally defined as words and expressions with culture-specific meaning. In the present paper, we focus on a particular type of realia, namely honorifics.

The analysis of realia is part of a broader research project on the circulation and reception of Italian films in Flanders (Belgium) (Caniato forthcoming). This research employs a bilingual parallel corpus, duly aligned and annotated, and draws on six films (70,910 Italian words; 58,987 Dutch words). The realia were categorised according to the translation strategy used in the subtitles (direct translation, generalisation, omission, retention, specification, substitution, official equivalent; Pedersen 2011). Our particular focus was on the subtitles of *Malena* (Tornatore 2000). This film is set in Fascist Italy and employs the Italian custom of honorifics with a view to, inter alia, creating humour, adding a regional flavour to the language, describing the characters' relationship with power, etc. However, these cultural aspects, condensed in the realia of the dialogue list, are barely reflected in the Dutch subtitles.

The analysis of the subtitles in Malena exemplifies how subtitling, as a cultural process, involves a renegotiation of meanings. In this paper we argue that this cultural process influences the choice and frequency of the translation strategies in use in the film, favouring denotative rather than connotative meanings.

KEYWORDS

Honorifics, subtitling, Italian, Dutch, audiovisual translation.

1. Introduction

This paper aims to contribute to the study of realia in the field of Audiovisual Translation Studies.

We will illustrate the role played by realia in a film dialogue, identify their communicative function and analyse the translation strategies employed to translate them into Dutch subtitles. We will go on to prove that realia are linguistic elements that condense symbolic and cultural meanings that are difficult to render in a target language.

According to the tradition of Translation Studies, realia, otherwise defined as 'cultural words,' 'names of particular entities,' 'culture-specific words,' 'ECRs,' etc., are words that refer to elements of daily life, history, culture, or products of a certain geographical area of the world that are not known

in other areas. We will refer to these words as realia because this is the most widely diffused term.

Vlahov and Florin (1969)[1] were among the first to define what realia are. According to them:

> In every language there are words that, without standing in any way out of the original verbal co-text, nevertheless are not prone to be transferred in another language with the usual means and that require a special attitude from the translator: some of these words pass in the text of the translation in unchanged form (they are transcribed), others may partly keep their morphological and phonetic structure in translation, and others must be replaced at times with lexical units of entirely different value or even 'composed.' Among these words one can find names of elements of daily life, history, culture, etc., of a people, a country, a place that do not exist among other peoples, countries and places. These very words in translation theory have received the name of realia (Vlahov and Florin in Osimo 2004: 63, our translation).

The definition of realia proposed by Vlahov and Florin was followed by many others. Robinson calls these words 'realia' (Robinson 1997: 171). Schäffner and Wiesemann (2001: 32) define realia as 'culture-bound phenomena and terms,' 'culture-specific items.' Newmark refers to them as 'cultural words' (1988: 94). Nedergaard-Larsen uses the locution 'culture-bound words' (1993: 207). Valentini (2009: 114) proposes the expression 'names of particular entities.' Pedersen calls them 'ECRs,' i.e. 'Extralinguistic Cultural References' (2005: 113, 2007, 2011). Loponen (2009) proposes the use of the neologism 'irrealia' to define invented fictional elements presented as real in fiction.

Pedersen's definition is particularly interesting, because it refers to the competence of the audience. For Pedersen, the question of realia shifts from the point of view of the translator to that of the target audience that designates the reference horizon for the reception of realia. However, in this paper we have chosen the more common term realia instead of Pedersen's notion of ECRs. The major reason for this lies in the fact that Pedersen's taxonomy of ECRs does not include honorifics. As Pedersen focuses on the 'extralinguistic,' he does not take into account honorifics, which are commonly considered to be an 'intralinguistic' phenomenon. In our view, however, honorifics as they are used in Italy (cf. infra) can be considered a clear example of how some realia present a complex interlacement between interlinguistic and extralinguistic aspects. For this reason, we have adopted the taxonomy proposed by Valentini (2009), which follows the tradition of Vlahov and Florin (1969).

Despite the fact that scholars use different terms to define what realia are, there is general consensus when it comes to recognising their scientific interest, due to their twofold nature that allows the study of the culture in the language and of the language in the culture.

The study of realia has aroused a great deal of interest in Audiovisual Translation Studies (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007; Loponen 2009; Pedersen 2005, 2007, 2011; Nedergaard-Larsen 1993; Ranzato 2010), because a cultural product, such as a television programme, soap opera, or fictional film is so rich in realia that it is difficult to discriminate between those that are essential, and should consequently be translated, and those that can be omitted to meet the limitations of subtitles. In fact, in a film dialogue realia are very frequent and functional cultural elements, given that they connect the audiovisual text to reality, fulfilling, as they do, a substantial cohesive function between the audiovisual text, the 'direct world,' and the 'indirect world[2].' This cohesive function is determined by the twofold nature of the realia that is both connotative and denotative. According to Vlahov and Florin, within realia:

> the connotation, and therefore also the colour, is part of the meaning, and accordingly it is translated together with the semantic meaning of the word. If one cannot do so, if the translator can only transmit the 'naked' semantics of the lexical unit, for the reader of the translation the loss of colour is expressed by the incomplete perception of the image, that is, in substance, his misrepresentation (Vlahov and Florin in Osimo n.d., our translation).

In this discussion, we study honorifics, which we consider a specific type of realia. Some scholars who have studied the translation of realia propose a classification of them (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007; Newman 1988; Nedergaard-Larsen 1993; Pedersen 2011; Ranzato 2010; Straight 1981; Valentini 2009). Vlahov and Florin (in Osimo n.d. and in Verstraete 2004: 27) list among realia words belonging to different categories that can be defined as honorifics (Brigadier, Mayor, Sheriff, Councillor, Lord, Sir, Madam, etc., our translation). Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 201) also propose a taxonomy that lists words that belong to the world of work among realia (farmer, gaucho). We follow this lead here, considering honorifics to form part of realia. This is one of the reasons why we decided to adopt the classification proposed by Valentini (2009: 294) that also incorporates honorifics under the realia heading, calling them 'honorary and professional titles' (our translation)[3].

We have chosen to study honorifics because of their importance in Italian culture, as demonstrated by the variety and frequency of the use of appellations and titles of honour in the Italian language. Italian honorifics are used to convey respect, demonstrate recognition of hierarchies and social positions (inferior, equal, superior), and express an attitude towards power. Whereas honorifics in Italian are widespread, their use in Flemish Dutch is by far less frequent. This difference gives rise to the question of how Italian titles of honour are translated when a cultural object such as a film has to be presented to a foreign, in this case Flemish, audience.

2. Definition of honorifics

The type of honorifics we intend to study in the Italian film *Malena* are nominal honorifics, which we define as polite forms of address that are nominal (e.g. relating to substantives) as opposed to verbal. These forms include honorific titles such as 'Sir' and professional titles such as 'Doctor.'

Whilst the academic study of forms of address is quite widespread (Agha 2007, Dickey 1997, Jacobs 2012, Lagorgette 2006, Shanson 1997, Wierzbicka 1992), less attention has been paid to the forms referred to as First Name/Title plus Last Name (Brown and Ford 1964; Hock 1984; Wierzbicka 1992). The study of terms of address in Italian (Balboni 2007; Mazzotta 2008) and their Flemish Dutch counterparts (Martiny 1996; Vermaas 2004) is relatively new.

Historically, the use of terms of address in Italian goes back a long way and is well established. Back in the 14th century, Dante Alighieri (in his *Divine Comedy*) used the title *Dottor* 'Doctor' to address his guide Virgil in their difficult journey through Hell (Alighieri 1949: 89). However, Dante did not mean 'medical doctor,' a profession that Virgil did not practise, but 'teacher,' deriving the term directly from the Latin verb *doceo* 'to teach.' As such, he immediately caused the necessary confusion when the term was brought into modern times.

Nowadays, Italians are still partial to using honorifics, not least in spoken language. Indeed, honorific titles such as *Signore* 'Sir' and *Signora* 'Madam' are the common polite forms to address a man or a woman in everyday life. These words should be combined with formal verb forms (such as verbal forms in the subjunctive and conditional modes) defined by Brown and Gilman (1960) as V-forms and can be accompanied by surnames (as in *Signora Rossi, entri pure*, 'Mrs Rossi, please come in'). The male form *Signore*, when combined with a surname, is truncated in *Signor (Signor Rossi)*. The term *Signorina*, traditionally used to address unmarried or young women, is subject to discussion, as it is considered politically incorrect, and, as such, rapidly becoming obsolete (Sabatini and Mariani 1993).

Male	**Female**
Signore (Sir, Mr)	Signora (Madam, Mrs)
Signor Rossi	Signora Rossi

Fig. 1. Use of the honorific titles *Signore* and *Signora*.

Professional titles are also very common in both professional and informal contexts and they are used both in combination with the surname and without it.

> A person with a law degree has Avvocato before their name. An engineer has Ingegnere (abbreviate to Ing. in correspondence), an accountant has Ragioniere (abbreviate to Rag. in correspondence), and an architect has Architetto. An elementary school-teacher is addressed as Maestro (m) or Maestra (f); a teacher at

> junior school level (11 years plus) is addressed as Professore/Professoressa (Shanson 1997: 118).

The combination of the two forms is also possible. One can address a doctor with the combined form *Signor dottore*. A non-contemporary example of this use can be found in this sentence verse where the d of doctor is not a capital letter, following the Italian contemporary tradition and where, unusually, doctor is not capitalised in English:

Fiordiligi Dorabella and Don Alfonso: "*Preso han l'arsenico Signor dottore*" "They have taken arsenic doctor" (Da Ponte 2005: 69).

The following glossary presents a short list of the most common professional titles with their equivalents in English.

Professional Title	**Translation**
Architetto	Architect
Avvocato	Lawyer
Cavaliere	Knight
Commendatore	Commander
Dottore	Doctor
Generale	General
Geometra	Quantity surveyor
Ingegnere	Engineer
Ingegnere della motorizzazione	Automotive Engineer
Monsignore	Monsignor
Onorevole	Honorable
Professore (male)	Professor
Professoressa (female)	Professor
Ragioniere	Accountant
Reverendo	Reverend
Senatore	Senator
Eminenza	Eminence
Santità	Holiness
Tenente	Lieutenant
Ufficiale	Officer
Eccellenza	Excellency

Fig. 2. The most common titles in Italian.

3. Honorifics in Italy and Belgium

With more than 60 million inhabitants, Italy is a major European country. Belgium has a population of only 10 million people and is divided into two independent regions characterised by different languages: Flanders, where the only official language is Dutch, and Wallonia, where French is spoken. Dutch is spoken in Flanders by 6.3 million people (out of a total of 10 million). Even though Dutch is the language that unites the Netherlands and Flanders, Belgium's linguistic situation is not helped by the fact that the

Dutch spoken in Flanders differs from the Dutch spoken in the Netherlands (De Caluwe 2002; Geeraerts 2001; Goossens 1975; Impe *et al.* 2008). A study on the linguistic differences between subtitles in Flanders and the Netherlands compares the difference between the formal standard language spoken in Flanders and in the Netherlands to the difference between formal English spoken in the United States and Canada (Remael *et al.* 2008).

In this study, however, only Flemish Dutch is referred to.

Nowadays, honorific titles such as *Mijnheer* 'Sir' and *Mevrouw* 'Madam' are the common polite forms to address a man or a woman. These words could be used in combination with polite verbal forms and could be accompanied by surnames.

Male	**Female**
Mijnheer, De Heer (Sir, Mr)	Mevrouw (Madam, Mrs)
Mijnheer Vleminckx	Mevrouw Vleminckx

Fig. 3. Use of the honorific titles *Mijnheer* and *Mevrouw*.

The use of professional titles in Flanders, other than in official settings, is very rare. This use is constantly diminishing and is, in fact, actively being discouraged by the many sites that offer language advice (e.g. Taaalunieversum).

Another significant difference between the use of honorifics in Italy and Flanders is their legal value. In Italy, the use of titles has recently come under attack because of an inconsistent interpretation of a Royal Decree dating back to 1938, which specifies that anyone earning an MA-level degree can, by law, carry the title *Dottore* 'Doctor.' The regulation has been wrongly copied verbatim and confirmed in a Ministerial Decree (Act No. 240/2010 Art. 17 Para. 2, Gelmini Reform) that states that nowadays the title *Dottore* 'Doctor' relates to anyone holding a BA degree. This decision goes against the trend in the EU where the use of study titles across the EU, as prescribed by the *Bologna Process*, has been made consistent. In this matter, the Italian tradition differs from the international one in that the title Doctor, which is normally reserved for PhD holders, is also used for both BA and MA degree holders. Italian PhD holders can use the title *Dottore di ricerca* 'Research Doctor' which, in everyday language, is once again reduced to *Dottore* 'Doctor.'

The importance of study titles and their translation in Europe should not be underestimated. The European Union has always invested a great deal of time and effort in the free movement of goods, people, capital, and workers (the four freedoms, see European Commission. Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) within the Member States. This freedom of movement inevitably implies the mutual recognition of study titles within the EU. With this in mind, the EU has created Eurydice, an entire European network that provides a legal framework for the internal recognition of study titles. Italy

is the exception here, as anyone who has completed three years of university in Italy can be and is indeed called Doctor in everyday life, whilst in the rest of Europe the title is reserved for PhD holders only.

4. Methodology

The film *Malena* has been chosen as the basis for this study, since it contains a high number of honorifics. The film, which was released and subtitled in Flanders in 2000, is presented here as a case study that illustrates the problem of translating honorifics from Italian into a language that does not share the same cultural attitude towards polite forms of address. Comparable problems are illustrated in scholarly literature on languages, including Akan (Agyekum), Japanese (Dittrich *et al.* 2011; Matsumoto 1997; Nariyama *et al.* 2011; Siegel 2000), Korean (Kyoko and Ho-min 1986), and Russian (Grevile 1981).

Malena forms part of a corpus of Italian films translated from Italian into Dutch in Flanders between 2000 and 2006 (Caniato forthcoming). The corpus consists of the original dialogue of six Italian films (70,910 Italian words) and their subtitles (58,987 Dutch words).

Title	**Abbreviation**	**Duration**	**Dialogue word count**	**Subtitles word count**
La meglio gioventù 1	LMG1	2h55 min.	17,550	16,826
La meglio gioventù 2	LMG2	2h57 min.	15,522	14,465
Malena	MAL	1h49 min.	6,681	4,469
Non ti muovere	NTM	2h5 min.	5,574	4,088
Pane e tulipani	PET	1h54 min.	9,625	7,248
L'ultimo bacio	UB	1h55 min.	15,958	11,891
Total		**13 hours**	**70,910**	**58,987**

Fig. 4. The corpus of Italian Films.

It is a parallel, bilingual, and annotated corpus obtained from the digital version of the films (DVD). In our corpus, realia have been classified according to the system proposed by Valentini (2009) for the annotation of Forlixt 1, which is a corpus specifically conceived for audiovisual translation. Forlixt 1 one of the major corpora for the study of dubbed films, recently adjourned to version 3, maintaining the same classifications of Forlixt 1, to which we refer.

> Forlixt 1 comprises scenes of films and transcripts aligned on a scene-by-scene basis so that occurrences can be retrieved along with their translation, from language A into language B, but also from language B into language A (Valentini and Linardi 2009).

We decided to adopt the categories of realia proposed in the corpus Forlixt, because they were created to classify audiovisual texts and they include categories such as Honorifics and Diseases that proved indispensable for our research[4]. We also adhered to a division in scenes (as opposed to division in subtitles or lines), although this division is more commonly used

in the corpora of dubbed rather than subtitled films. We consider a scene to be a non-separable semiotic unit, where the narration of one or more actions happens in the same place, in continuity and in a unity of time (Valentini 2009: 81).

The films had been tagged according to their title, number of scenes, categories of realia, presence of monocultural realia, translation strategies, etc. Thanks to these tags, it was relatively straightforward to identify and isolate honorifics in the corpus.

Once the honorifics in the film *Malena* had been identified, we analysed them to find the underlying translation strategies that were used to render them into Dutch, using the classification proposed by Pedersen (2011). In his taxonomy of translation strategies applied to realia in subtitles in Scandinavian countries, Pedersen identifies seven main strategies: retention, specification, direct translation, generalisation, substitution, omission and official equivalent (Pedersen 2011: 74). The same categories were utilised to identify the translation strategies of our corpus.

Retention is used when the term of the source text is retained in the subtitle without major changes. The following examples are extracted from the corpus. The first row presents the original DVD version and the Dutch subtitles, the second the back translation.

MAL, 1, IT[5]	**MAL, 1, NL**
Questa sera, alle ore 17 **Il Duce** parla alla nazione!	Hedenmiddag om vijf uur spreekt **Il Duce** het volk toe.
Tonight, at 17 hours Il Duce talks to the nation!	Tonight at 5 hours Il Duce talks to the nation.

Fig. 5. Retention.

Specification is used to add information making the subtitle more specific than the film dialogue, for example by expanding or explaining a name or acronym.

MAL, 20, IT	**MAL, 20, NL**
Renato, la miglior pistola del **West**!	Renato, jij hebt de grootste van het **Wilde Westen**.
Renato, the best gun in the West!	Renato, you have the biggest of the Wild West.

Fig. 6. Specification.

Direct translation. The only thing that changes is the language, there are no semantic changes. Proper names are rarely translated, but this strategy can be used, for example, for public institutions or geographic names.

MAL, 15, IT	**MAL, 15, NL**
Buongiorno, posso parlare con l'**avvocato** Centorbi?	Kan ik **advocaat** Centorbi spreken?
Good morning may I speak with the lawyer Centorbi?	May I speak with the lawyer Centorbi?

Fig. 7. Direct translation.

Generalization. This strategy makes the subtitles less specific than the film dialogue through a hyperonym or a paraphrase.

MAL, 37, IT	**MAL, 37, NL**
Ordine del **Fascio**!	Opdracht van de **regering**.
Order of the Fascist party.	Order of the government.

Fig. 8. Generalization.

Substitution. The realia are replaced by other realia that may belong to the same culture or to a completely different one.

MAL, 10, IT	**MAL, 10, NL**
E io dico al **generale** che tu non mi vuoi mai mandare all'esercitazione del partito fascista!	Ik vertel de **Partijsecretaris** dat ik niet naar de exercitie mocht.
And I say to the general that you do not ever want to send me to the exercise of the Fascist party!	I say to the Party Secretary that I was not allowed to the exercise.

Fig. 9. Substitution.

Omission. The realia are not in any way reproduced in the subtitles. This strategy is probably used more often in subtitles than in other forms of translation because of the specific constraints imposed on subtitles. Indeed, subtitles normally stay on screen for a limited time and are one or two lines long.

MAL, 1, IT	**MAL, 1, NL**
Camerati di **Castelcutò**!	Kameraden.
Comrades of Castelcutò!	Comrades.

Fig. 10. Omission.

Official equivalent. This can be determined by both common use or by a decision taken at an administrative level.

MAL, 13, IT	**MAL, 13, NL**
Ma guarda questo… Dieci **Lire**, alla cassa.	Tien **lire**, bij de kassa.
But look at him... Ten lire, at the cash register.	Ten lire, at the cash register.

Fig. 11. Official equivalent.

The corpus-based quantitative analysis of realia is complemented by a qualitative press analysis of the films, viz. an analysis of articles published

in papers, magazines, and sites in Flanders that review the films in the corpus. This press analysis aims to identify the different themes of the film and correlate them with the presence of realia. We have analysed reviews of *Malena* in the Flemish press as well as synopses which have appeared on specialised websites from the film's release up to the date of writing. On the basis of the reviews in the Flemish press, we reconstructed the plot of the film as it was presented to potential viewers. Then we linked the development of the narration to the use of honorifics in the different scenes of the tagged corpus.

The aim of the press analysis is twofold: to determine cultural meanings within the film and to associate these meanings with particular examples of realia

5. The translation of honorifics in *Malena*: quantitative analysis

The film *Malena* tells the story of Renato, a boy who is secretly in love with Malena, the beauty of the Sicilian village of Castelcutò. All the men in the village desire Malena, while all the women envy her for her beauty and call her a whore. Malena's husband is fighting in the Fascist army and Malena thinks that he is dead. She is surrounded by men's desire and women's despise, and she cannot defend herself. Malena has to face a process of adultery and rape. She has no money and no-one to protect her and, as if in a self-fulfilling prophecy, she becomes a prostitute to survive. When her husband unexpectedly returns, Malena's social integrity is restored thanks to his love. Although Malena's husband has been informed by Renato that she has been a prostitute, he does not reject her.

Compared to the other films of the parallel corpus, *Malena* contains an average amount of words for its duration, but has a rather high concentration of honorifics: 53 honorifics appear in 24 scenes (out of a total of 64 scenes), representing 38% of the honorifics of the entire corpus.

This high concentration is particularly challenging for translators who do not have the same range of honorifics in their own language. Although, in line with Pedersen's results (2011: 158) we might expect retention to be the most used translation strategy, in *Malena*, we found omission to be significantly more common than retention. In the whole corpus, omission is used as a translation strategy for 25% of the honorifics, whilst in Malena, it accounts for 45%. Retention is the adopted strategy for 11% of the honorifics in Malena, whereas in the whole corpus, 28% of the honorifics are translated this way.

The 53 honorifics found in the film were translated by applying six translating strategies out of the seven: generalisation, direct translation, omission, retention, specification and substitution. No official equivalent was used to render the honorifics.

Translation strategy	**Honorifics**
Omission	24
Direct translation	18
Retention	6
Substitution	3
Generalisation	1
Specification	1
Total	**53**

Fig. 12. Translation strategies applied to honorifics.

As shown in figure 13, 45% of the honorifics in the source text have not been rendered in the target text.

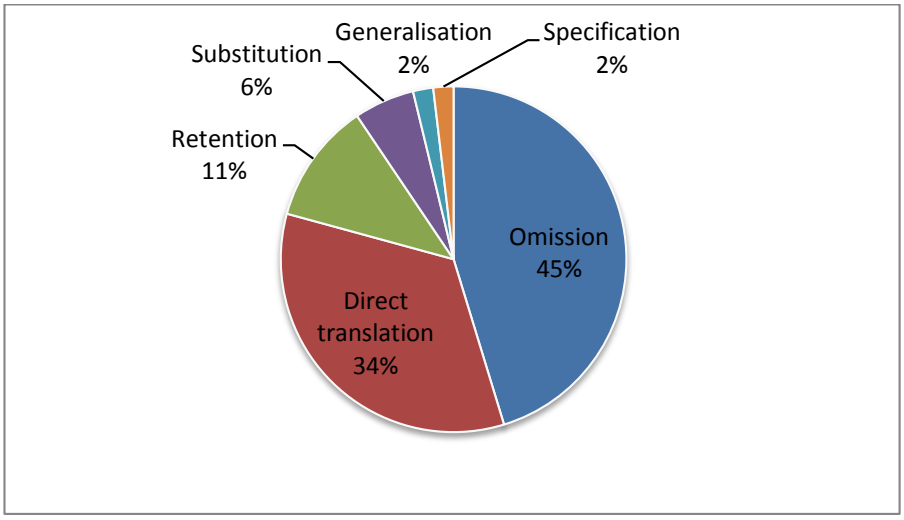

Fig. 13. Translation strategies applied to honorifics in *Malena*.

This result is at odds with the same statistical results extracted from the whole corpus, where omission plays a less relevant role.

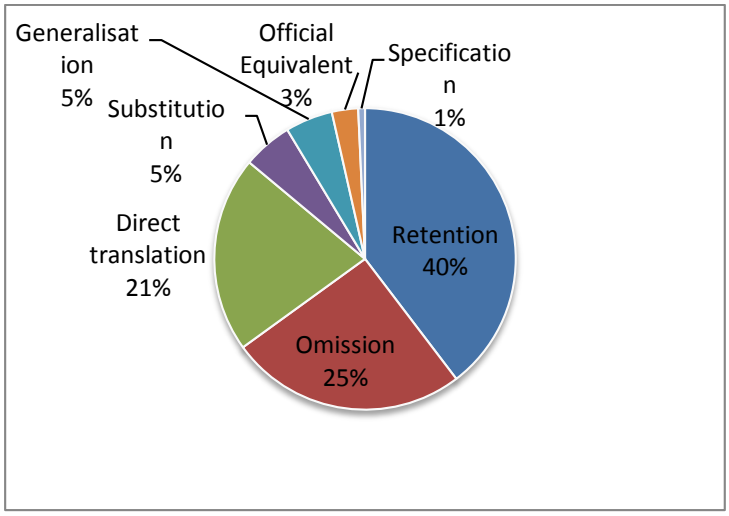

Fig. 14. Translation strategies in use in the whole corpus.

As can be seen in Figure 14, in the whole corpus, omission is only applied in 25% of the cases to translate realia. Retention is the most frequently used strategy, used in 40% of the cases, in contrast to 11% of the cases in *Malena.* The omitted honorifics are:

Italian Honorific	**English translation**
Avvocato	Lawyer
Cancelliere	Chancellor
Dottore	Doctor
Eccellenza	Excellency
Geometra	Quantity surveyor
Pretore	Praetor
Professore	Professor
Ragioniere	Accountant
Segretario	Secretary
Signora	Madam
Tenente	Lieutenant

Fig. 15. The omitted honorifics.

These honorifics were not only omitted, they were also translated in the film with other strategies: the title *Signora*, for example, was also translated with the strategy of retention.

MAL, 15, IT	**MAL, 15, NL**
Buongiorno **Signora** Malena.	Goedemorgen, **Signora** Maléna.
Good morning Mrs Malena.	Good morning, Signora Maléna.

Fig. 16. Retention of Signora.

In the same vein, the honorific *Il Duce* (article + noun) was retained in four scenes (MAL, 1, MAL, 22, MAL, 37, MAL, 50) out of a total of five. The honorific is used in IT only for Benito Mussolini, the dictator who was keen to compare himself to ancient and glorious Roman emperors. It is the Italian translation of the Latin word *Dux* 'leader.'

MAL, 1, IT	**MAL, 15, NL**
Il Duce	**Il Duce**
The Leader	The Leader

Fig. 17. Retention of *Il Duce*.

The honorific *avvocato* (lawyer), used with vocative value, was always omitted.

MAL, 39, IT	**MAL, 39, NL**
Avvocato, vi prego	
Master... please	

Fig. 18. Omission of *avvocato* with vocative function.

It was not omitted when it had an attributive function.

MAL, 15, IT	**MAL, 15, NL**
Buongiorno, posso parlare con l'**avvocato** Centorbi?	Kan ik **advocaat** Centorbi spreken?
Good morning may I speak with the lawyer Centorbi?	May I speak with the lawyer Centorbi?

Fig. 19. Direct translation of *Avvocato*.

The professional titles *geometra* 'quantity surveyor' and *ragioniere* 'accountant' appear in the corpus only in one scene, and one case is just not enough to advance hypotheses about the strategies adopted in these specific cases. These omissions are not surprising, given that these professions do not have an exact equivalent in Flemish (*landmeter* and *boekhouder*). To give an example, in Italy, a *geometra* is responsible, inter alia, for the design of buildings, which is not the case in Flanders.

MAL, 15, IT	**MAL, 15, NL**
Che faccio col **geometra**?	
What do I do with the surveyor?	

Fig. 20. Omission of the full sentence with *Geometra*.

MAL, 54, IT	**MAL, 15, NL**
Ragioniere, questa sera	Vanavond
Accountant, tonight	Tonight

Fig. 21. Omission of *Ragioniere*.

One may expect that an honorific such as *Dottore* would have been rendered in the film with an official equivalent, but in fact, this is not the case. This title only occurs in three scenes (MAL, 15, MAL, 33, MAL, 37). It is omitted in MAL, 15 and MAL, 33 and is rendered in MAL, 37 with a confusing abbreviation. Because of the unclear use of *Dr.* in Dutch, we marked the translation as direct.

MAL, 37, IT	**MAL, 37, NL**
Signora, Voi siete accusata di avere coinvolto il dottore Gaspare Cusimano in una segreta e impropria relazione amorosa mirando al disfacimento della di lui famiglia. Lo conoscete il **dottor** Cusimano?	U wordt ervan beschuldigd Dr. Gaspare Cusimano te hebben verleid...tot een geheime en amoureuze relatie... met als doel zijn gezin te ontwrichten. Kent u **Dr.** Cusimano?
Madam, you are accused of having involved doctor Gaspare Cusimano in a secret and improper love affair aiming at the disintegration of his family. Do you know Dr. Cusimano?	You are accused of having seduced Dr. Gaspare Cusimano ... to a secret and amorous relationship ... with the aim of disrupting his family. Do you know Dr. Cusimano?

Fig. 22. Direct translation of *Dottore*.

According to the dictionary Van Dale, this abbreviation refers only to the academic title 'doctor.' Nevertheless, in Flanders *Dr.* can also be used to refer to the professional title of 'medical doctor' (*arts* or *dokter* in Dutch) of the Italian dialogue. Similarly, the word 'professor,' used in MAL, 47 to address a teacher of a *Liceo* (high school, pupils aged 14-19, Shanson 1997: 118) is translated in the subtitle as *Professor* and not as *Mijnheer*, the term normally in use in Flemish schools.

These cases demonstrate the (high degree of) difficulty the translator faces when confronted with Italian honorifics; it may well explain the absence of official equivalents as a translation strategy for the film.

6. Interpretation of the data: cultural meaning of honorifics

In order to gain a better insight into the decisions behind these translation strategies, we decided to resort to a qualitative approach much like content analysis, more specifically, a press analysis.

On the basis of this press analysis, we reconstructed the plot of the film as it was presented to potential viewers. Based on the analysis of the plot, the scenes, and the honorifics occurring at different points of the narration, we propose that *Malena* can also be seen as a film about power and hierarchies.

Honorifics occur in many scenes of the film (24/63). Since honorifics highlight the political and social role of the characters, their prevalence throughout the film seems to emphasise the rigid social hierarchy that dominated Italian culture in the era depicted in the film.

A closer inspection of the use of the honorifics that refer to the protagonist Malena suggests that they primarily serve to express the hypocritical relationship that the characters have with power and hierarchies: independently from what people actually think of them, public figures retain their honorific title as long as their official status is preserved, but lose them as soon as their public role changes.

At the beginning of the film (scenes MAL, 14, IT; MAL, 15, IT; MAL, 18, IT), Malena is called *Signora*, since she is married and respectable, although it is rumoured that she is a *whore*[6]. Then the drama happens (scenes MAL, 35, IT; MAL, 36, IT; MAL, 37, IT; MAL, 38, IT; MAL, 39, IT; MAL, 40, IT); at this point, while all public figures (lawyers, doctors, soldiers, etc.) retain their titles, Malena is no longer a *Signora*: the honorific is never used in these scenes. When order is restored at the end of the film (MAL, 63, IT), she is called *Signora* again. The restored use of the word confirms the restoration of her status of respectable wife, now of a veteran, in the new political order of post-war Italy.

The use of honorifics referring to the character of Malena suggests that the film can also be seen as a reflection on social hierarchies and hypocrisy towards all forms of power.

While reflection on power is present in every culture, the actual form of this reflection varies from culture to culture. In Italy, this is one of the main cultural themes, deeply entrenched in literary and cinematic tradition, as borne out by literary examples that date as far back as Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* or Machiavelli's *The Prince* to more recent cinematic works such as *Il divo* (Sorrentino 2008) or *Vincere* (Bellocchio 2009).

In the next section, we deepen our understanding of the cultural references that are at the Italian viewers' disposal when they watch a film like *Malena*. As is evident from the following (non-exhaustive) survey, Italian viewers can count on a specific encyclopaedia of knowledge that is not shared with other cultures.

7. Italian honorifics: cultural references

Italian theatre and literature can help us understand how power and hierarchies are represented in the Italian tradition and what the attitudes are towards them.

The title of *Dottore* 'Doctor' was first formally used by the University of Bologna (approx. 13th century) to "denote an academic degree other than that of 'magister' and reserved for those who teach medicine, law and theology (Treccani.it, our translation)." The title and profession were the inspiration behind the mask of the *Dottore* in the *Commedia dell'Arte* (Rudlin and Crick 2001), but the character type of the false scholar existed in popular representations way back in time and can probably be compared to the *senex* of Latin comedy and to the *pedante* (pedantic) of 16th-century humanist comedy. While the *Dottore* is the personification of the fortunate who can study and become rich and important, it also diminishes their very authority. According to Marin (2002: 120), the masks of the *Commedia dell'Arte* are the historic mirror of the Italian attitude towards the powerful: they express veiled sarcasm and outright cowardice, improvised and bombastic homage, but also display Harlequin and Pulcinella's surreptitious and persistent contempt of authority. Many literary and cinematic works have followed this tradition: *The Betrothed* (novel, Manzoni 1840), *The Leopard* (novel, Tomasi di Lampedusa 1958; film, Visconti 1963), *Divorzio all'italiana* (film, Germi 1961), *Il processo di Frine*, (film, De Sica 1952).

It is with similar costumes and a similar attitude, that the film *Malena* represents the public figures of Castelcutò: while they deserve deference and respect, they are also the subject of irony, contempt, and verbally expressed humour (Attardo 1994).

It may seem far-fetched to revisit these literary quotations to explain *Malena*'s representation of powerful figures, but it is important to stress that most, if not all, Italians would be reminded of these cultural references when presented with a *Dottore* and would think it reasonable to laugh at them. At the same time, in modern Italy, everybody who has a bit of power is called *Dottore*, without any reference to the medical or academic profession.

In conclusion, this emphasis on the honorifics in *Malena* and their specific use when they refer to the main character suggest that the film can also be seen as a reflection on social hierarchies and power in general. However, whereas the Italian audience can easily understand this aspect of the film, this is not necessarily the case for other audiences. It is safe to say that the use of honorifics as a way of expressing cultural meaning that forms part of the Italian cultural tradition is not shared by other, in this case Flemish, audiences.

8. Discussion: why the translation of honorifics is problematic in Flemish Dutch

As explained above, the use of honorifics in Italy is different from that in Flanders and honorifics express a view of hierarchies and power that a non-Italian audience finds difficult to appreciate. These cultural aspects, condensed in the realia of the dialogue, are barely reflected in the Dutch subtitles.

In *Malena*, honorifics are expressed with different communicative purposes, such as deference, respect, irony, verbally expressed humour, etc. Deploying all these layers could prove problematic for non-Italian audiences, no matter how accurate the subtitles are. For instance, as has been pointed out by Chiaro (2006: 198) and many other scholars (Chiaro 2010a, 2010b), the translation of verbally expressed humour is an especially thorny issue, both practically and theoretically.

The quantitative analysis presented in section four has shown that more than half of the honorifics included in *Malena* are omitted (45%) or retained (11%), while only 6% are substituted, i.e. adapted in order to have an intelligible reference in the target culture. Moreover, one third (34%) of the honorifics are translated directly.

In what follows, referring to Pedersen's analysis of translation strategies, we will attempt to account for the results of the quantitative study, while integrating them within the results of the qualitative analysis.

Pedersen (2011: 105) lists seven parameters[7] that influence the choice of translation strategy employed by the subtitler in dealing with realia. Out of these parameters, transculturality, is the most influential from the point of view of communication, for subtitlers must decide whether the audience of

a certain film is, in fact, able to understand certain realia or if they should intervene in the translation to support the audience. Monocultural realia are those generally understood by the source culture, but not present in the encyclopaedic knowledge of the target culture. Not all members of the source culture know these realia, but we can assume that they are accessible to the majority of the audience.

> A Monocultural ECR[8] causes a translation problem, which arises because the referent of an ECR can be assumed to be less identifiable to the majority of the relevant TT audience than it is to the relevant ST audience, owing to differences in encyclopaedic knowledge (Pedersen 2011: 107).

Monocultural realia often cause translation problems because there is no equivalent in the target language; there is merely a formal correspondent. A source language may well have a correspondent in the target language which could be used in the translation, but the mere existence of a correspondent does not mean that it carries the same meaning in the target language.

In the case of the honorifics in *Malena,* it is possible to translate realia into an equivalent Dutch form, however this form does not reflect the tradition, use or meaning of the original. Honorifics exist in Dutch but are used differently and on different occasions. To quote one of our previous examples, it is possible to become a *geometra* 'surveyor' in Flanders, but you cannot carry a legal title and be referred to through the honorific in the same way as you can be in Italy. While in Italy, it is possible to earn this title after five years of secondary school, the Flemish education system does not include a type of secondary school where one can only study this subject. Moreover, the Flemish title of *landmeter* 'surveyor' is not, or can only marginally be, used as honorific.

All these observations lead us to conclude that the use of honorifics in Italy, and by extension in Italian films, is exquisitely monocultural.

Pedersen's analysis provides us with a framework that we can use to assess the strategies adopted in *Malena.* The qualitative analysis presented in section five supports the interpretation of honorifics as monocultural realia: neither the social functions, nor the connotative values of honorifics are transparent for non-Italian viewers. Monoculturality can therefore be seen as the reason why omission is the main translation strategy used for the realia analysed in this paper (45% of the cases) and direct translation is the second most common strategy. Given their monocultural character, honorifics can only seldom be adapted, substituted (6%) or, in fact, rendered with an official equivalent by the translator. When faced with honorifics, the subtitler has for the most part chosen not to portray them in Dutch, which could be taken as a comment / judgement on their importance. As a result, however, one of the themes of the film, i.e. the

reflection on hierarchies and power, is no longer available to the Flemish audience.

To summarise, this analysis of realia has shown that honorifics are prevalent in *Malena* and are a peculiarity of this film. Moreover, this examination of translation strategies has taught us that rendering honorifics is problematic and that, in many cases, the subtitler has avoided rendering them in the target language. The qualitative analysis of the press has further shown that the inherent problem in translating the honorifics in *Malena* not only relates to the differences in education systems between Italy and Flanders (as in the case of *geometra* for example), but also to the attitude towards power that the use of honorifics expresses in the Italian cultural context. In other words, the problems in the translation of honorifics from Italian to Dutch are not primarily located at the level of denotation, since there are in Dutch formal equivalents for the Italian titles, but are, in fact, located at the connotative level, because Italian honorifics also express a wide range of speakers' attitudes that are absent in their Dutch equivalents.

Based on the results of the qualitative study and on Pedersen's analysis of the parameters that influence the choice of the translation strategies, we have come to the conclusion that in most cases Italian honorifics can be seen as monocultural realia and that, because of the translation strategies predominantly used in subtitles (omission and direct translation), one of the themes of the film, namely the reflection on hierarchies and power, becomes barely accessible to non-Italian viewers.

9. Conclusion

Realia are cultural elements that appear frequently in a film dialogue and carry a fundamental cohesive function: they connect the audiovisual text, the direct and indirect world. If we think, for example, of place names which generally speaking make up the lion's share of realia present in a film along with person's proper names, their contribution to the credibility of the film is vital. The fact that *Malena* takes place in Castelcutò and that this is a specific village in Sicily during WWII is an irreplaceable element of the semiosis: all the realia that relate to this location add referential value to the fictional narrative.

As it happens, this cohesive function is determined by the connotative and denotative nature of realia. Their denotative nature influences the level of referentiality of the text, their connotative nature represents the symbolic and cultural meanings of the film.

In conclusion, we can look at realia as a twofold element that allows the study of the culture in the language and of the language in the culture. This means that, to fully understand the connotative dimension of realia, we need to understand the symbolic dimension of the cultural meanings of a

film. Only by creating a connection with the connotative dimension of realia and the symbolic meanings of a film can we hope to go beyond "the naked semantics of the lexical unit" (Vlahov and Florin in Osimo n.d.).

Honorifics are a category of realia frequently used in Italian. They are polite terms of address required in many formal social encounters. They express respect and professional recognition; they carry legal value and denote social hierarchy. In the film *Malena*, they are used to convey all these meanings. But they are also used to express the bombastic homage, combined with the surreptitious and tenacious contempt of which the Italian audience of many works of cinema and literature is acutely aware.

This is one of the connotative levels of honorifics that subtitles should try to preserve, because they reflect the symbolic meaning of the film. The analysis of the translation strategies used in the subtitles of *Malena* shows a general underestimation of this connotative level of communication.

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Biographies

Manuela Caniato holds a PhD degree in Linguistics from the University of Ghent. She currently holds a scholarship for postdoctoral research on the language of fashion and its translation. Her past and present research brings a sociological, linguistic and media-analysis approach to different communication phenomena. Her duties include teaching Italian at Ghent University, Belgium, in the Department of Translation, Interpreting and Communication.

Claudia Crocco is an Associate professor of Italian Linguistics at Ghent University, Belgium. She obtained a Ph.D. in General Linguistics in 2004 (University of Naples Federico II, Italy), with a thesis on intonation and pragmatics in Italian. Her research focuses on spoken Italian and includes the study of the relationship between intonation, syntax, and pragmatics and the analysis of restandardisation processes in contemporary Italian.

Stefania Marzo holds an MA and PhD degree in Linguistics from the University of Leuven (KU Leuven, 2006). She is currently assistant professor of linguistics at the KU Leuven, where she teaches Italian linguistics. She previously held a lectureship at the University of Ghent. Her research interests lie primarily in the fields of variationist sociolinguistics and contact linguistics. In particular, she focuses on sociolinguistic variation of Italian (in and beyond Italy), and on the emergence and diffusion of multilingual vernaculars in urban settings (in particular, ethnolectal varieties in Flanders).

Endnotes

[1] We know about their study from two sources: Osimo (2004) and Verstraete (2004), because Vlahov and Florin published *Neperovodimoe v perevode. Realii* in Russian.

[2] We use the expressions 'direct' and 'indirect world' as indicated by Eugeni (2011: 10) to define the world of reality and that of representation. As indicated by Loponen (2009), in fictional texts there are also invented elements presented as real in the imaginary world, but in fact non-existent at referential level. These are the realia that belong to the indirect world.

[3] The capitalisation of titles is not always consistent, particularly in Italian where one can address a doctor with the combined form *Signor dottore*, or as *geometra* and *ragioniere* for instance. In the example of *Cosi fan tutte* quoted on page 184, 'doctor' is neither capitalised in the original or in the translation.

[4] These categories are: Clothing; Food and beverages; Hierarchies; Games and entertainment; Institutions, associations, organizations, political parties; Education; Books, films, opera, magazines and television programmes; Diseases; Currencies and units of measure; Anthroponyms; Famous persons and celebrities; Market and cultural products; Religion; Sport; Honorifics; Toponyms; Holidays and national festivities (our translation).

[5] The Italian films are indicated by their title and the scene number, as found in the corpus. The first column includes the Italian dialogue, the second the Dutch subtitles. The line underneath shows our translation in English. The bold text is ours.

[6] Unfortunately the word 'whore,' not being an honorific, was not included in the classification.

[7] Transculturality, Extratextuality, Centrality, Polysemiotics, Media-specific constraints, Co-text, Subtitling Situation.

[8] According to Pedersen (2011), ECR (Extralinguistic Cultural References) is a more accurate way of defining realia.